


# Tips for Planning a Family Literacy Event



## **Planning and Promotion**

- Collaborate with your public library to plan and promote the event. They can bring library card applications and information about services available to support out-of-school reading time.
  - Identify your target group: parents of beginning readers, families with preschoolers, etc.
  - Identify your message(s). Are you promoting the importance of reading at home? Reading over the summer to combat summer learning loss? Trying to increase access to books and other reading materials?
  - Identify your talking points. Choose three – five strong statements that everyone helping facilitate the event can communicate.
  - Choose the format of your event: parent workshop, open house, interactive centers for families, storytime, school-wide event, etc.
  - It works well to involve the kids-- from displaying their artwork in the library to involving them in a group activity that you can highlight during your event. Include child's first name and age on the art and mat it with construction paper or tagboard frames.
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- Make your event as comfortable and welcoming as possible, and provide incentives for attending: food, door prizes, etc. Find a “hook” for your target group and use it in promoting the event.
  - Carefully consider the timing of the event: month, day of week, and time of day. What will work best for your target group?
  - Consider the needs of your target group: child care, transportation, work schedules, family responsibilities, etc. Is there any way to address these needs in planning your event?
  - Make sure you give families plenty of advance notice and put it on every calendar you can, and communicate in print, verbally, visually, electronically, etc. If the parents see/hear the information several times and in several places, they will be more likely to conclude that the event is important to attend.
  - If possible, do a reminder robo-phone call the day before or the day of your event, or put reminder stickers on young children's shirts or coats.

## **Family Events**

- Bring local “celebrities” on board, such as the school superintendent, mayor, high school or college athletes, authors/musicians/artists, police or firefighters, other political figureheads, etc.
- Literacy/STEM Stations: Consider setting up learning stations for your family event. Use a passport or menu card to keep track and offer rewards for completing at least two stations. Or leave stations set up for a week or two and allow families to come back in to complete the passport/menu for prizes.

- Many libraries have called upon teen volunteers to help with the family event. Teens can prepare and facilitate activity stations, man the refreshment table, and other tasks that free the librarian to work with parents.
- Costumed book characters seem to always be a big draw for families (see Resources below).
- Put the emphasis on fun!



### **Parent Workshops**

- Consider co-presenting with public library staff.
- Find ways to offer reliable childcare on-site: other library or school staff, local Girl Scouts, etc. Plan structured activities for the children, such as storytimes, craft activities, snacks, games, etc.
- Make the participants comfortable in attending. Promote as an informal affair and encourage participants to bring a friend or family member. Provide an ice breaker activity so attendees get to know one another.
- Model the behaviors you are trying to teach.
- Set clear objectives and share those, along with the agenda, at the beginning of the workshop.
- Make your workshop interactive. Break up lectures or Power Point presentations with hands on activities:
  - Think / Pair/ Share (see Resources section below)
  - Small group discussion activity
  - Hands-on look at books or other materials
  - Make-and-take activity

### **Resources**

#### *Planning:*

- Location - If space is not available at your school library or within the school, alternative sites could include: public library, churches, community centers, Elks/Rotary/other membership organizations' sites, and Boys and Girls Clubs.
- Planning worksheet template: Provided in this binder.

#### *Promotion:*

- Incentives to attend:
  - Paperback books- leftovers from summer reading, low-cost orders from First Book Marketplace or Book Bank ([www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org)), book exchange

- Read to Me occasionally has overstock books that could be given as incentives or door prizes on a first-come, first-served basis, especially if you are partnering with your public library. Contact a RTM coordinator at least one month in advance of your event to determine if overstock is available.
- Rewards from principal or classroom teachers
- Meals/snacks: PTA, donations from local grocers/restaurants, business partners
- Title One Schools: If you work at a Title One school (over 50% of enrollment qualifies for Free and Reduced Lunch) there may be funds available to support your event if the focus is specifically on family literacy. Contact your principal to discuss this possibility.
- Costumed Book Characters: Having a favorite book character at the event has proven to be an effective way to bring families to an event. Costume Specialists, Inc. in Ohio is one company that provides children's book characters on behalf of several publishers. The only cost is second-day air shipping to send the costume to its next event. The company has a great selection of storybook characters. For more information about booking a costume visit [www.costumespecialists.com/index.html](http://www.costumespecialists.com/index.html).
- Translation header: Boise School District's website has a link to a Word file that borders the page. It says "This is very important. Please find someone to translate". It is in these languages: Russian, Swahili, Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, French, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Czech, Farsi, Uzbek, Arabic, Chinese.  
<https://www.boiseschools.org/cms/one.aspx?portalId=508306&pageId=2984262> (or go to boiseschools.org and use the Search function for "ELL forms.")

#### *Family Event/Parent Workshops:*

- Read to Me's Idaho Family Reading Week: Third week of November each year
  - A toolkit will be uploaded to the ICfL website: <http://libraries.idaho.gov/landing/idaho-family-reading-week>.
  - ICfL typically provides books and/or resources to libraries that register their events on our website. More information can be found on the Read to Me website each year.
- Support Materials: Read to Me has a wide variety of publications and support materials to distribute to parents and children during your events. Ordering is easy and free: <http://libraries.idaho.gov/webforms/read-to-me-support-materials-order-form>
- Early Literacy Skills Crafts/Activities:
  - Read to Me has an overstock of the blank door hangers used for Every Child Ready to Read. Libraries can request these on a first-come, first-served basis.
  - Libraries participating in a Read to Me program qualify for a 50% discount card from Quality Art Supply Store in Boise. See Staci for more information.
  - For libraries participating in Every Child Ready to Read, consider setting up your display boards, and use some of the materials such as the music CD and poems/rhymes displays.



- Offer families/parents a free writing kit, pre-assembled from a variety of old unused greeting cards, writing utensils, stationery, stickers, stamps, etc. and placed in ziplocked baggies or unused pizza boxes.
- Think-Pair-Share is a cooperative discussion strategy that could be used in a parent workshop. Think-Pair-Share is helpful because it structures the discussion. Participants follow a prescribed process that encourages participation and limits off-task behaviors, and accountability is built in because each must report to a partner, and then partners must report to the group.
  - 1) Think. The facilitator provokes participants' thinking with a question or prompt or observation. The participants should take a few moments (probably not minutes) just to THINK about the question.
  - 2) Pair. Participants PAIR up to talk about the answer each came up with. They compare their mental or written notes and identify the answers they think best fit the question.
  - 3) Share. After participants talk in pairs for a few moments (again, usually not minutes), the facilitator calls for pairs to SHARE their thinking with the rest of the group. She can do this by going around in round-robin fashion, calling on each pair; or she can take answers as they are called out (or as hands are raised). Often, the facilitator or a designated helper will record these responses on chart paper.

